The truth about Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him)

[English]

الحقيقة عن الرسول محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم

[اللغة الإنجليزية]

(*In the light of the Glorious Qurân and the Sunnah*)

في ضوء القرآن الكريم و السنة النبوية

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The truth about Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him)

Loving him is following him

Muslims all over the world are deeply hurt by the recent caricatures of our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, in Danish and several other publications.

Every now and then, some Western media outlets provoke Muslims by insulting the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The baiting often succeeds in eliciting Muslims' outrage and sporadic violence.

The latest incident started with a Danish newspaper's caricature portraying the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a terrorist. To add insult to injury, Norwegian, French, German, Dutch and a few other newspapers reprinted the defamatory cartoons to "defend"—they claimed—the freedom of expression.

The real issue is not the freedom of expression. Free speech is not and was never meant to be absolute. There are laws in the West that ban certain kinds of speech, including those that incite anti-Semitism, racism and violence. Moreover, some countries have laws against blasphemy and defamation. To Muslims, banning blasphemy against Allah and the Prophet Muhammad has a higher priority.

For the European newspapers to reprint the offensive cartoons to show solidarity with their Danish counterpart seems akin to the plot the leaders of Quraysh had hatched to assassinate Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The Quraysh masterminds had figured that including representatives from major tribes of Makkah in the heinous plot would make it impossible for the Prophet's clan, Banu Hashim, to avenge. But Allah willed that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would migrate to Madinah unscathed while the plotters laid siege to his house.

The West often underestimates the Muslims' reverence for their beloved Prophet Muhammad, (sallallallahu alayhi wa sallam) and is, therefore, staltred by the fierce Islamic reaction to an insult against him. Few in the West know that for Muslims, loving their Prophet more than themselves is a matter of faith, not choice.

Further, the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, as a terrorist is a falsification of history. He was considered "Al-Ameen," the trustworthy, by his people even before he received the Prophethood.

Once, when asked by some of his followers to invoke Allah's wrath on the enemies, he ﷺ refused saying he ﷺ had been sent as a mercy unto mankind.

Objective Western intellectuals have acknowledged the superior character of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In his "The 100, a Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History," Michael H. Hart ranked Prophet Muhammad, (sallallallahu alayhi wa sallam) No. 1 because "He was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels."

Alphonse de Lamartine, a renowned 19th Century French writer, had this to say about the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: "As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than him?"

Unfortunately, some Muslims forget that loving their Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) means following him. Burning Danish embassies, as they did in Damascus and Beirut, to avenge the insult to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is a complete disservice to him. Our violent reaction only plays into the hands of those who wish to reinforce the negative stereotypes about Muslims.

Do Muslims need reminding that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, forgave the people of Ta'if who had rejected his message of monotheism and pelted him with stones, bloodying him? Islamic tradition has it that when Jibreel (Archangel Gabriel) sought his permission to punish the perpetrators, the Prophet ﷺ, instead prayed that some day the inhabitants of Ta'if would leave their idols and worship Allah alone. Within a few years they did.

Prophet Muhammad's, (sallallallahu alayhi wa sallam) servant once noted his forgiving disposition, said, "I served the Prophet ﷺ, for ten years, and he never said 'uf' (a word indicating impatience or discontent) to me and never blamed me by saying, `Why did you do so or why didn't you do so?" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Prophet Muhammad's, (sallallallahu alayhi wa sallam) archenemies hated his Message and hurled malicious insults at him, to which he responded with forbearance. Years later when he, sallallallahu alayhi wa sallam returned as victor to Makkah, his city of birth which he was forced to leave, he asked its awed citizens, "What do you think I'm going to do to you." They said, "You

are a noble brother, son of a noble brother; we expect only good from you." The Prophet ﷺ responded with a general amnesty.

Let Muslims not forget that the Prophet ﷺ, encouraged freedom of expression. In the Battle of Badr, he ﷺ changed the battlefield against his own opinion due to the passionate advice of some young soldiers.

Part of the West's success today is the freedom of expression, of thought, of religion—that draws Muslims to it from their oppressed societies. For that, Muslims should be thankful to the West. After all, freedom is an Islamic value that the West has embraced while Muslim societies have forsaken.

Defending Prophet Muhammad ﷺ requires allowing freedom and practicing compassion and forgiveness, like he did. In his lifetime he ﷺ, bore insults with magnanimity and devoted his time to spreading the Message of Allah. In fact, he never avenged anyone for a personal offence. Can we really respect him by violent retaliation?

Muslims should turn this extremely painful incident into something positive, by teaching the world what the Prophet ﷺ, means to us and what his life was like.

As for the West, there really is a need to reexamine the notion of free speech. Without safeguards, the exercise of this freedom can be lethal, as we have seen.

One may ask, is it morally defensible to provoke violence, cause death, and create a civilizational conflict for one cartoonist's freedom of expression?

The West already has laws to protect religious freedom, which Muslims and other peoples of faith admire. What it now needs to do is protect this freedom from being trampled by unbridled free speech. No one should have to insult Prophet Muhammad, Jesus, or Moses, may Allah exalt their mention to speak freely.

We can turn these negative, malicious cartoons into something positive by learning about the Prophet ﷺ, by following him, and educating others about his teachings.

Allah described the Prophet ﷺ in the verse (which means): "And verily, you (O Muhammad) are on an exalted standard of character." (Quran 68:4)

And (what means): "Indeed in the Messenger of Allah there is a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much." (Quran 33:21)

By a divine decision, the status of Muhammad ﷺ was raised forever, as in the verse (which means): "And (has Allah not) raised high your fame?" (Quran 94:4)

Muslims were commanded to lower their voices low in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ, out of respect, as in the verse (which means): "O you who believe, raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him as you speak aloud to one another lest your deeds be rendered fruitless while you perceive not. Verily, those who lower their voices in the presence of Allah's Messenger, they are the ones whose hearts Allah has tested for piety. For them there is forgiveness and a great reward." (Quran 49:2-3)

While other prophets were sent to their own people, Muhammad ﷺ was appointed as the Messenger to all mankind. And such he was asked to declare (what means): "Say (O Muhammad): `O mankind, verily I am sent to you all as the Messenger of Allah - to Whom belongs the Dominion of the heavens and the earth." (Quran7:158)

On the Day of Judgement he ﷺ will be the only Messenger to intercede with Allah to seek forgiveness for the wrongdoers.

As blasphemous as the drawings are, we believe that behind all events there is Allah's pre-decree and wisdom that mortal beings fully understand only in hindsight. In the end, this deeply hurtful incident would be seen as benefiting the image of the Prophet ﷺ.

A case in point is the verse (which means): "Verily, We have given you (O Muhammad) a manifest victory." (Quran 48:1)

When this verse was revealed, even some of the most exemplary Muslims could not understand how being prevented from performing pilgrimage by the enemies could be a manifest victory. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had just signed a treaty with non-Muslims of Makkah that imposed unfair restrictions on Muslims.

The Prophet ﷺ swore by Allah that no matter how restrictive this treaty seemed, it was a clear victory for Muslims. Within a few years, the victory became abundantly clear when Muslims marched into Makkah, not just as pilgrims but as victors.

Our love for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ cannot be expressed except by following him. If we did that, we will see how Allah can change this painful incident into a great opportunity for the Islamic cause.